HOLYHEAD SONNETS.

BY

GEORGE DAVIES HARLEY,

COMEDIAN.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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The musings of a wand'ring mind,
The workings of a widow'd heart;
While rolls the wave, and roars the wind,
Foul as my fortune—I impart;
And as I range these rugged rocks among,
To *kindred feeling* dedicate my song.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

SONNETS.

SONNET I.

ROCK-HOUSE.

WAITING FOR A POST-CHAISE TO PARK-GATE.

LOUD howls the blast, and through the clashing tide
The vent'rous vessel cuts her foamy way,
Or bares to many a wave her swelling side,
Her white sail kissing every saucy spray;
Thus, in his simple skiff, the seaman bold
Unfurls his canvas, when the timid fear!
His skill his rudder, his stout heart his hold,
He sees no danger, or contemns it near.
And happy he, who on a wave more rough,
A more uncertain, far more treach'rous sea,
Can stem LIFE's torrent with endurance tough,
Nor dread the drift to foul Misfortune's lee;
But honour-cas'd contract the straining sail,
Reef to the rising storm and weather out the gale!

SONNET II.

PENMAN-MAWR.

PRODIGIOUS PENMAN-MAWR! whose stature fills
With wild delight the wond'ring mind of man!
Monarch of beetling rocks and rugged hills,
Vast buttress of the main—thou land Leviathan!
O'er thy bleak brow when IRIS, colour-proud,
Far from the wave hath wrapt her crescent warm,
(The vaulted sky thy roof, thy cap a cloud)—
The seaman's morning sign, that soon shall rise the storm;
How have I seen thee, when the vengeful wave
Split its white fury 'gainst thy Druid face,
Mock its proud might, till it hath ceas'd to rave,
And the spent surge of foam ran rippling round thy base.
So stands stern TRUTH, in batter'd grandeur bold,
Tho' madd'ning Malice roar, and fretful Falshood scold!

SONNET III.

ON SEEING

A POOR WELCH GIRL

PASS MY WINDOW IN A STORM.

SWEET lovely Lass! though of the low degree,
Thy long black locks, 'all drench'd in this foul storm,'
With thy blue mantle just to keep thee warm,
And hide thy bare clogg'd foot, thy naked knee—
Thou art of ancient CAMBRIA's hardy race,
Inur'd to toil, and ev'ry gust that blows,
Or this rude wind would ravish the fresh rose
But now just op'ning on thy fancy face!
Thou art of VIRTUE! for thy unpress'd breast,
Of rounded beauty, swells upon the sky,
While the bright lustre of thy dark-brow'd eye,
And simple seraph smile, speak PEACE AND REST.
GOD of the good! be these her future dow'r,
And screen with thy wide wing this else unshelter'd flow'r!

SONNET IV.

TO

THE MOTH.

POOR, simple MOTH! that in the taper's ray
(Like some young lover, by his mistress' eye
Caught and entangl'd close) delight'st to play,
And bask thee, reckless of the danger nigh;
Oh! with a soul that knows to *pity* thee,
Thy persevering passion too *admire*,
Flutt'ring—thy light and filmy wing I see
Sing'd—and to seeming, struggling to *retire*.
Yet no! the beam that rioted thy frame,
Brings thee but back with more enrag'd return,
To rue, *devoted* victim! that the same
Bright beam which *comforteth*, alike can *burn!*
Yet better far, than *still* at distance sigh,
To snatch th' EXTATIC bliss, and in the *rapture* DIE!

SONNET V.

TO

THE ATHEIST.

THE treble rainbow cross'd the refluent wave,
'Neath its wide arch the furious west wind pass'd;
Sudden the swelling ocean 'gan to rave,
As Fate itself went howling in the blast.
Now go thy ways, blind Infidel! and learn
Where moves the mighty GOD, thou dar'st deny!
See if thou can'st his dreadful form discern,
Who on the whirlwind scours the troubl'd sky;
And in this storm-black night, with firm faith bold,
While the wet sea-boy shudders in the shroud,
Full five feet water in his leaky hold,
Or started main-mast to the billows bow'd,
There—as thou stand'st upon the delug'd deck,
Invoke HIS out-stretch'd arm to snatch thee from the wreck!

SONNET VI.

DESPAIR.

DESPAIR! I will not know thee—never yet
Stalk'd thy gaunt shadow 'cross my clouded path,
Huddling in ill-concealing folds of jet
Destruction's weapons; but a bright beam hath
Scar'd thee far off, and shrunk thy recreant arm,
About to tender Hell's thrice-blasted means
To end affliction's pangs! Of surer harm
To man's sunk soul, than all of life's ban'd scenes
Can fall to Mis'ry's lot. No, GOD of good!
If harder still my struggling heart must strain,
By the tough trials I have yet withstood,
Thine is the storm, and I will not complain;
But pluck fresh courage from endurance past,
And wrestle with the woe that yet may wreck at last.

SONNET VII.

HOPE.

HOPE! who can paint thy form, thy tricksy hues
In which thou lov'st to flaunt it? Yet as coy,
And like cold Virtue, fly'st the tender'd joy,
Or unclasp'd Maid, when wild Impatience woes.
Oh! many an anxious wakeful hour have I
Implor'd thy presence, made thee all my theme,
Yet thou hast only dally'd with my dream,
And I have scar'd thee with the morn's first sigh;
Or, but when heaviest woes my heart hath bow'd,
Burst would thy phantom beauty on my sight,
Like some condens'd, but sweetly op'ning cloud,
"That turns her silver lining on the night."
Yet will I track thy flight, thy trusting eye,
Nor quit thee till I clasp thee in the SKY!

SONNET VIII.

THE

PROSPECT.

FROM all I LOVE, from friends and kindred torn,
Fortune's mere sport, o'er craggy cliffs I stray,
And wind and wave-bound, shape my cheerless way
With unattended step, and thought forlorn:
Ah, me!
Condens'd and low'ring raves the stormy sky,
Wild the vex'd wave as my unsettl'd soul,
And dreary, desolate around, the whole
My poor sunk mind embraceth—all mine eye
Doth see!
But *patience*, FOOL! thine *was* the white-wing'd hour,
The budding rapture blighted in the flow'r;
And smile may *yet* the Heav'ns, that now do low'r
On thee!

SONNET IX.

THE

PEASANT OF ANGLESEA.

ENCIRCL'D by thy Naiads' arms,
And far from warfare's wild alarms,
Know that I envy thee
Thy healthful toil, thy humble lot,
Thy little but contented cot—
Peasant of Anglesea!
Thy wall-fenc'd fields, thy wave-wash'd shore,
The scudding sail, the surge's roar,
These, these I envy thee!
Thy wishes few, thy cravings small,
By labour just indulg'd in all—
Peasant of Anglesea!
And with warm heart thy untam'd temper greet,
Rude as thy rugged rocks—but as their herbage, sweet!

SONNET X.

THE

PASSAGE.

IMPATIENT of delay, our Captain brave
Flung his broad canvas o'er the adverse wave;
Soon rose the midnight storm—with wrecking pow'r
Raves the third dark day's desolating hour;
And now her lab'ring sides of Cambrian oak,
Stemming, though drifting 'fore the tempest's stroke,
Almost, poor beating bark! to parting strain,
And cry for quarter to the madd'ning main;
Vain their loud cry, terrifick roars the blast,
In spray and mist obscur'd the viewless mast,
The CRISIS comes! and on the raptur'd sight
Through flaggy vapours bursts the flood of light!
The sea-boy sings, the distant HEAD descries,
And back o'er wild, blue waves the bold-wing'd
BESBRO' flies!

SONNET XI.

TO

MY CONSCIENCE.

WELL! in the put-off hour of peril past,
CONSCIENCE, blunt guest! thou did'st not come uncall'd,
Nor in thy presence was my heart appall'd,
My heart of many a woe—that thought each wave the last,
Since when with thee in solitude have I,
And with a spirit sworn to censure crime,
Turn'd o'er the records of departed time,
And scrutiniz'd each act with most suspicious eye;
Yet laps'd in years, or wrapt in mental gloom,
My soul's just judge, thou hast discover'd nought
But poor imperfect NATURE's *venial* fault,
Which Mercy may look o'er, not vengeful Justice doom;
Passion of heart, nor purpose of the brain,
But I will hug like life, and with that life maintain.

SONNET XII.

THE

PARTING.

OH, God! it is no very easy task
To shake the hand, articulate "adieu!"
When the soul's meaning spurns the specious mask,
And gives the last, last look, to speechless feeling true;
For Friendship never could its sense *express*,
Nor warmer Love its pang of parting *tell*,
But oft the hand, extended to caress
The lip of swerveless faith, where loiters long—
"Farewell!"
Like coward flies—nor takes the grappling grasp
Of that close, clinging, following fool—the Heart;
Nor yet Affection's wild and bosom clasp,
With kiss of honey'd glue, that knows not how to part.
Yes! I have fled full oft, and smother'd with a smile
A heart with anguish rent—weeping life-blood the while!

SONNET XIII.

THE

RETURN.

THE same keen sense that barbs the pang to part,
Points the wild rapture when RETURN draws nigh;
When bosoms beat to bliss, warm heart to heart,
Hand grappling hand, and eye encount'ring eye,
The round tear sliding down the burning cheek,
In sweet Elysium lapp'd the speechless pow'rs;
Or eyes suffus'd, that eloquently speak,
Shining like summer suns through May's soft show'rs!
Then, then it is that souls of purer fire
Snatch the rare rapture sacred to the few;
The clinging kiss—the chat unknown to tire,
And blest embrace which DULLARDS never knew.
Oh! let me count not life by days and years,
But smiles of sweet RETURN thro' SEPARATION's tears!

SONNET XIV.

REFLECTION.

WHEN I run o'er, in retrospective view,
My BOYHOOD's *childish* hour, not *yet* gone by,
And trace my strangely-tissu'd fortunes through,
I heave REGRET's, but not COMPUNCTION's sigh!
Chilly but kindly rose my Winter's morn,
I hail'd its sunshine, and I brav'd its blast;
But Man, as sparks ascend, to mis'ry 's born,
And his high-Noon blank cares will overcast;
Yet through those scenes where Envy frames her toil,
The snares, the wiles, the falshood I have known;
I've walk'd regardless of their serpent coil,
And boast my *baited* HONOUR still mine own.
Nor will I from her poor, but proud possessions part—
Her *independent* MIND—her *uncorrupted* HEART!

SONNET XV.

THE

EMBLEMS.

'THE sighs we heave, the tears we shed,
Are records all of rapture fled,
Of dear delights gone by!
Sad heralds, that escape to tell,
How soon the summer blossoms fell,
And with'ring where they lie.
The shiver'd oak, the leafless tree,
Are, man of mis'ry, types of thee—
Of wheedling HOPE the care;
Which, like yon ivy, loth to part,
Shadows awhile the wasting heart,
And wreathes the branches bare.
But soon to silent earth our trunks shall bend,
Tho' soothing love entwine, and Hope her succour lend!

SONNET XVI.

TO

THE ELEMENTS.

HOW, how have I offended, ye vex'd Skies,
And Element so wrathful, that ye rise
All adverse to my wishes? I have done
Ye not a wrong, nor my worst en'my none;
Why is it, then, that thus from day to day,
From put-off year to year, ye yet say nay
To my soul's purpose? Wherefore, like the wind,
And these white waves, my fortune still unkind?
"Oh, I am Fortune's fool!" the changeful hour,
That smiles on others, still on me doth low'r;
Still am I doom'd to meet, and forc'd to feel,
The frontlet of her face—the tortures of her wheel.
"A man, indeed," since PASSION's wild beginning,
And REASON's dawn, "more sinn'd against than sinning!"

SONNET XVII.

IN ABSENCE.

BRIGHT burns the fire, and in my little room,
As the gay tapers fling their glare around,
All things a sort of courteous smile assume,
A silent greeting, e'en surpassing sound;
All seem to say, as conscious of a guest,
Widow'd, forlorn, and wand'ring but to fret,
Sweetly reproaching my desponding breast
With—*Come, come, thankless churl, be cheerful yet!*
Ah, that I could!—But 'twill not, 'twill not be;
My heart is sick, my soul almost despairs;
I have no Children clamb'ring up my knee,
No Partner here to charm away my cares!
Or starry brisk my now swoln eyes would play,
Their seraph smiles my SUN, and but their beams my DAY!

SONNET XVIII.

CLONTARF.

CLONTARF! sweet jetting of HIBERNIA's bay,
Where peerless beauty bathes her seraph form,
And meets the cool curl'd wave with bosom warm,
A Wand'rer hails thee with his stranger lay!
Here, here I catch from Britain's rocky shore
Her eastern gale, of gratulation cold,
Breathing no flatt'ry; hourly here behold
Her white-wing'd, well-mann'd skiffs come flying o'er!
Hence let me then, with each returning tide,
With each brisk breeze that wantons in the west,
Disperse my hoarded pray'rs, and wishes wide,
For those most lov'd; and o'er a land so blest,
From thy fam'd SHEDS, through perils gain'd at last,
Dispatch the longing look, and ponder on the past!

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